

I wonder if anyone has ever answered “no” when asked if they were teachable. “No, I’m done being taught – I already know everything I need.” Makes for a good chuckle, but we wouldn’t really admit to thinking that.

We couldn’t completely stop learning if we wanted to. Our five senses are constantly feeding new information to our brain. But the question, “Am I learning?” is different than, “Am I teachable?”

Learning can be passive, happening to us pretty much by accident. Or our curiosity may drive us to experimentation that we learn from. But the idea of being *teachable* implies being in a state where we *welcome* insights from others.

Being teachable increases our ability to influence others. Not only does it expand our expertise, but seeing how we’re best influenced can also teach us how to influence others.

Here are some characteristics of highly teachable people:

- **They seek help.** We’re not talking about just dumping work on others. Teachable people readily acknowledge that others know things we don’t or do things better than we can.
- **They accept that differing views can provide insights that they lack.** Rather than dismissing those they disagree with, they value the differences as opportunities to learn. Teachable people actually believe someone else’s opinion might be better than their own! The worst truth seekers are those who believe they already have the truth; so teachable people keep an open mind to the possibility they might be wrong.
- **They acknowledge their mistakes and make corrections.** Teachable people see failures as opportunities to learn. The true failure would be not admitting their error or blaming someone or something else. That would become an obstacle to future learning – and that’s unacceptable to teachable people.
- **They will learn from anyone and everyone.** Everyone follows a unique path through life, so regardless of position or status, everyone has experiences that I lack. So I can learn something from everyone. Even when receiving unfair criticism, teachable people cut through the sting and look for every underlying truth. Teachable people aren’t willing to miss a learning moment because of who delivers it. *The pickier we are about who we’re willing to learn from, the less teachable we are.*
- **They seek mentors.** Teachable people always have one or more mentors in their life. Their hunger for learning makes them seek out people who can help them grow.
- **They are vulnerable and seek feedback.** They know they have blindspots, and they know they need others to help them recognize them.
- **They’re good listeners.** It’s hard to learn when you’re doing all the talking. Teachable people listen well, and when they have a chance to speak they will most likely ask questions to learn more. Rearrange the letters in “listen” and you get “silent”.



The common thread that ties all these together is *humility*. Arrogance blocks teachability. If you don’t believe you need to be teachable, you can be certain your humility needs some work.